INTRODUCTION TO OIE GUIDELINES FOR THE WELFARE OF AQUATIC ANIMALS

Article X.X.1.1.

Guiding principles for aquatic animal welfare

1. That there is a critical relationship between *aquatic animal* health and *aquatic animal* welfare.

2. That the internationally recognised 'five freedoms' as they apply to *aquatic animals* (freedom to express normal patterns, freedom from pain, injury and disease; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition) provide valuable guidance in *aquatic animal* welfare.

3. That the internationally recognised 'three Rs' (reduction in numbers of *aquatic animals*, refinement of experimental methods and replacement of *aquatic animals* with non-animal techniques) provide valuable guidance for the use of *aquatic animals* in science.

4. That the scientific assessment of *aquatic animal* welfare involves diverse elements which need to be considered together, and that selecting and weighing these elements often involves value-based assumptions which should be made as explicit as possible.

5. That the use of *aquatic animals* in *aquaculture*, harvest or capture fisheries, research and for recreation (e.g. ornamentals in aquaria), makes a major contribution to the well-being of people.

6. That the use of *aquatic animals* carries with it an ethical duty to ensure the welfare of such animals to the greatest extent practical.

7. That the improvements in *aquatic animal* welfare can often improve productivity and food safety and hence lead to economic benefits.

8. That equivalent outcome (performance criteria), rather than identical systems (design criteria), be the basis for comparison of *aquatic animal* welfare standards and guidelines.

Article X.X.1.2.

Scientific basis for guidelines

1. Welfare is a broad term that describes how well *aquatic animals* are coping with their environment, management and handling conditions with regard to their optimal health and well being, and minimising negative environmental, physiological and other stressors.

2. The scientific assessment of *aquatic animal* welfare has progressed in recent years and is the basis for these guidelines. Many areas of *aquatic animal* welfare may require further research to understand in full the ability of *aquatic animals* to feel pain and be sentient.

3. Measures of *aquatic animal* welfare may involve assessing health and injuries; growth, behaviour, and other performance factors; capture, feeding, handling, management, transport, slaughter and other conditions not normally encountered in nature. Environmental and other stressors may also affect *aquatic animal* production and performance negatively, many of which can be measured and observed in wild, captured and farmed *aquatic animals*.

4. Such measures can lead to criteria and indicators that help to evaluate how different methods of managing *aquatic animals* influence their welfare.